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1. AI which could conduct research and plan ahead: What is OpenAI's secret project 'Strawberry'?**Why in News?**

The AI race is intensifying, with tech giants pumping billions into the research and development of new models. US-based OpenAI became a major player in the field after launching its AI chatbot ChatGPT, with its capabilities including answering questions based on prompts and processing images. But that may change.



OpenAI is reportedly building a new AI model, which may dramatically improve AI reasoning capabilities and allow them to undertake 'autonomous' internet research — something existing models cannot do. What is the project and why does it have the potential to be disruptive?

What is Project Strawberry?

Nearly six months ago, a secretive OpenAI project named Q* (Q-Star) made headlines. It was reportedly a plan for making AI capable of training itself in a new way, so that it would have planning, logical reasoning, and capabilities similar to that of a human brain.

Recently, a report in Reuters revealed more about the project, saying OpenAI is working on a new reasoning technology under the code name "Strawberry", believed to be the new name for Project Q*. Internal documentation from the company mentioned OpenAI's intention to use Strawberry for deep research. As of now, the project's exact features and details are closely guarded, including its release date.

However, it is certain that with Strawberry models, OpenAI wants AI models to plan ahead, scour the internet autonomously, and do deep research.

How will it be different from existing AI models?

As of now, Large Language Models (LLMs), which form the basis of AI chatbots, can summarise dense texts and compose prose instantly. However, they struggle with common sense problems and multi-step logic tasks. Strawberry models, with their enhanced reasoning, would be seen as a catalyst for AI to make some landmark scientific discoveries and undertake complex problem-solving.

According to experts, reasoning involves enabling AI to plan, understand the physical world around them and its functions, and handle multi-step problems. Currently, LLMs cannot plan ahead effectively without the support of external frameworks.

With Strawberry, AI would perform tasks that require planning and a series of actions over an extended time. In the past, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman had discussed why AI models should take time, even days to think through problems and provide the best answers. If this is achieved, it could revolutionise AI's ability to accomplish any given complex task all by itself.

How will such powerful AI models be used?

Strawberry models are aimed at significantly improving AI capabilities. Such models could undertake advanced research — conduct experiments, analyse data, and suggest new hypotheses. This could lead to multiple breakthroughs in sciences. In medical research, they could assist in drug discovery, research in genetics, and even analyse vast datasets to devise personalised medicines.

With enhanced problem-solving abilities, AI could solve complex mathematical problems, help in engineering calculations, and even participate in theoretical research. It could handle problems requiring logical deductions and be helpful in legal analysis and strategic planning. The models could also greatly aid education by offering personalised tutoring, creating educational content and interactive lessons.

In business, these models could analyse market trends, predict economic changes, assess risks, and help with investment decisions. Similarly in creative fields, it could also aid in writing, creating art and music, generating videos, and designing video games.

With human-like reasoning skills, these models could affect change across industries. Improved AI capabilities would also further existing criticism of AI in terms of its impact on jobs, the vast amounts of power it requires to run, and the ethical questions surrounding its reproduction of existing works by humans.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

2. What is the International Centre for Audit of Local Governance, which the CAG inaugurated in Gujarat?

Why in News?

According to the CAG's note, the International Centre for Audit of Local Governance (iCAL) will be a collaborative platform for policymakers, administrators and auditors linked with local governments.

Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India Girish Chandra Murmu inaugurated the International Centre for Audit of Local Governance (iCAL) in Rajkot. The institute, a first in the country as per the CAG office, will function out of the office building of the Accountant General (account & entitlement and Audit-1) in Rajkot and aims to set global standards for auditing local governance bodies.

How will iCAL work?

According to the CAG's note, iCAL will be a collaborative platform for policymakers, administrators and auditors linked with local governments. It will enhance the local government auditors' independence to ensure improved financial performance assessment, service delivery, and data reporting. It will also serve as a centre of excellence for capacity building of local government auditors.



How are local bodies audited in India?

India has a three-tier governance structure comprising the Union or Central government, state governments, and local bodies at urban and rural levels. Panchayati Raj Institutes (PRIs) like village panchayats, taluka (block) panchayats and district panchayats have been set up for self-governance in rural areas, with Urban Local Bodies such as municipal corporations and municipalities in urban areas.

While keeping accounts is the responsibility of the concerned local body, many state governments have an

Examiner of Local Fund Accounts (ELFA) or Director of Local Fund Accounts (DLFA) for auditing their accounts. In Gujarat, for instance, the ELFA is an autonomous office functioning under the aegis of the finance department.

ELFA audits the utilisation of funds granted by the state government to local bodies. Other institutions, such as universities, also audit their performance. The CAG, on the other hand, conducts audits of all funds (including the state and Central governments). It also exercises control and supervision over the proper maintenance of accounts and auditing for all three levels of PRIs/ULBs. Under its technical guidance and support initiative, CAG also advises and supports ELFA or DLFA and thereby supplements the latter's work.

Why was a need felt for it?

Murmu said during his visit to Rajkot in January that there are around 2.5 lakh panchayats and 8,000 urban local bodies (ULBs) in India. He said 40 countries have their respective supreme audit institutions (SAIs) conducting audits of local bodies and there is a need to promote global good practices.

While the CAG said that a lot of funds are flowing to local bodies now and there is a need for proper auditing of these institutions, there have long been concerns about the lack of funding available to local bodies, and its utilisation.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Governance

Source: Indian Express

3. How do Assam's Foreigners Tribunals function? How do these tribunals decide whether a person is Indian or not? Does the Border police play a role?

How did the FTs come about?

The FTs are quasi-judicial bodies formed through the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order of 1964 under Section 3 of the Foreigners' Act of 1946, to let local authorities in a State refer a person suspected to be a foreigner to tribunals. The FTs are currently exclusive to Assam as cases of "illegal immigrants" are dealt with according to the Foreigners' Act in other States.

Each FT is headed by a member drawn from judges, advocates, and civil servants with judicial experience. The Ministry of Home Affairs told Parliament in 2021 that there are 300 FTs in Assam but the website of the State's Home and Political Department says that only 100 FTs are currently functioning.



What is the role of the Border police?

The Assam Police Border Organisation was established as a part of the State police's Special Branch in 1962 under the Prevention of Infiltration of Pakistani (PIP) scheme. The organisation was made an independent wing in 1974 and is now headed by the Special Director General of Police (Border). After the liberation war of Bangladesh, the PIP scheme was renamed Prevention of Infiltration of Foreigners or PIF scheme. The members of this wing are tasked with detecting and deporting illegal foreigners, patrolling the India-Bangladesh border with the Border Security Force, maintaining a second line of defence to check the entry of illegal foreigners, and monitoring people "settled in riverine and char (sandbar) areas". This is apart from referring people of suspicious citizenship to the FTs to decide whether they are Indian or not based on documents.

How does an FT function?

According to the 1964 order, an FT has the powers of a civil court in certain matters such as summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him or her on oath and requiring the production of any document. A tribunal is required to serve a notice in

English or the official language of the State to a person alleged to be a foreigner within 10 days of receiving the reference from the authority concerned. Such a person has 10 days to reply to the notice and another 10 days to produce evidence in support of his or her case. An FT has to dispose of a case within 60 days of reference. If the person fails to provide any proof of citizenship, the FT can send him or her to a detention centre, now called transit camp, for deportation later.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

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